



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORE RODENTS TEST POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS

Use Wet Cleaning Methods, Don't Sweep or Vacuum Rodent Droppings

Six rodents trapped by County Vector Control technicians last week in the Tijuana River Valley and Elfin Forest areas have tested positive for the sometimes-deadly hantavirus, County Environmental Health officials said Tuesday.

Environmental Health Director Jack Miller said infected mice in the wild rarely pose a danger to people, but that discovering them should remind people the virus is prevalent in the county and to be extra careful when cleaning up rodent infestations in their homes.

"People should never sweep up or vacuum after infestations," Miller said. "Instead, they should ventilate areas and then use wet cleaning methods with a 10 percent bleach solution. The best way to prevent the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds by sealing all holes the size of a dime or larger."

Wild rodents, primarily deer mice, carry hantavirus. People can contract it by inhaling dust particles from rodent droppings and nesting materials that contain the virus. The virus can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which begins with flu-like symptoms, but can graduate to severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for hantavirus and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that HPS has killed 36 percent of all the people known to have contracted the disease.

How to Avoid Exposure:

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas. Do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with feces and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

Use "wet-cleaning" methods to prevent inhaling the virus:

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water) onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

For more information, contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. Or click here to view this video: ["Hantavirus - The Airborne Menace."](#)

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